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Secret Things

margaret Lovell Andrews

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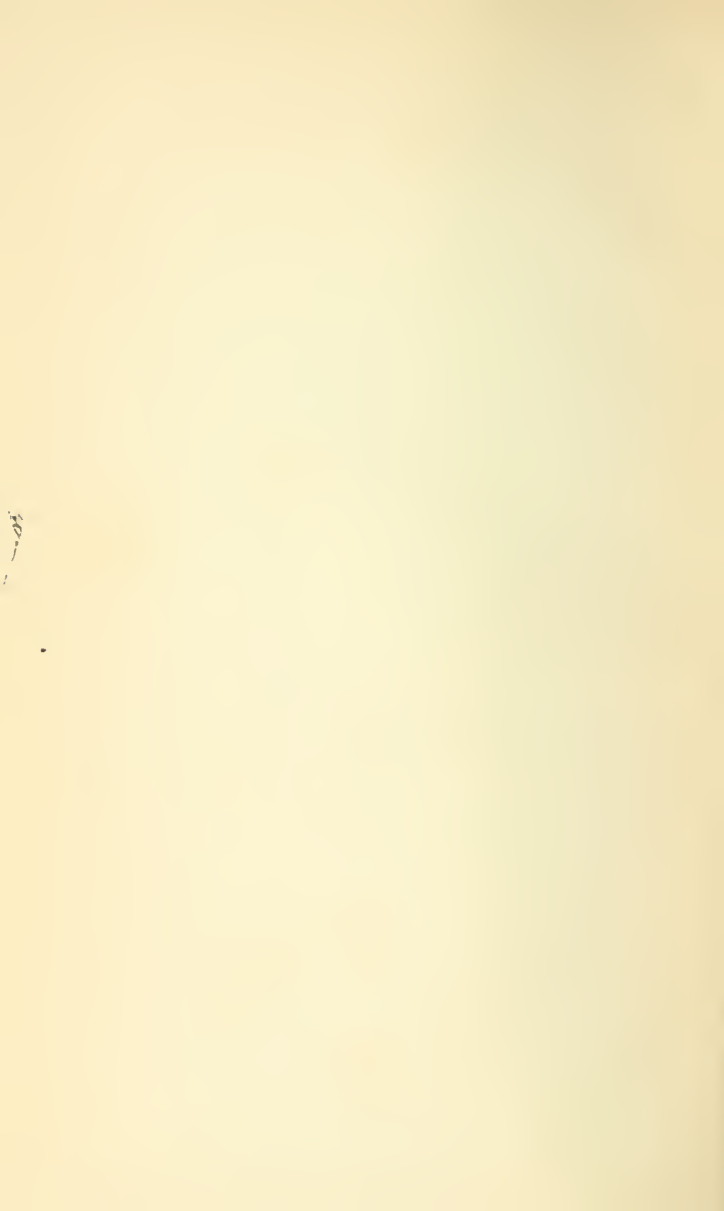
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The Secret Things

The Secret Things

By
Margaret Lovell Andrews
///

London
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I have to thank the Editors of the *Nation*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Pall Mall Magazine*, the *Daily News*, and *Scotia* for hospitality and then for courtesy in allowing certain poems to become guests of another host in this book.

To
MOTHER AND FATHER,

Who have long pondered in their hearts

“The Secret Things”

of

his “philosopher”

and

her “poor little poet.”

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Secrecy

*“ It follows naturally from my fundamental creed that avoidable silence and secrecy are sins.”—H. G. Wells :
“ First and Last Things.”*

IF to the world I am but worth the sum
Of that which I have been
And seen,
Dare I be dumb ?

I dare. For, dizzy on the heights around
God's pool of silence, brain
With pain
Stumbles to sound.

I dare to hide the wounds I took when Death
Broke idols and my heart.
Depart,
O tempter's breath :

What help to any if I showed the whole
Death-dealings of my Lord,
Whose sword
Pierces my soul ?

The Secret Things

Nor will I show the secret hurts which He
Touches : nor bare the sin
Within,
My leprosy.

He charged one leper straitly : “ Thou shalt tell
No man My touch.” Then why
Should I,
His parallel ?

For if I talk away a secret grace,
I finger, to His wrath,
The cloth
That wraps His face.

Written after Pain

PAIN, at his laying on of hands, has signed
(Pity the blind !)

A girl's hair with his cross to-day.

I shall

Have his sign-manual

Writ there in grey.

Not only at street corners need men cry.

Blinder than I

They of the curbstone cannot be.

My feet

Go stumbling down Pain's street

Called Mystery.

He teaches pity? Do I need that cut?

My heart is but

A whetstone daily for his knife,

Grown blunt

With hacking at the front

Most hearts show life.

The Secret Things

Then I teach pity? Blessed if I were
 A harbinger,
 To give her lodging where she lacked!
 I have
More pity than I gave:
 The measure's packed.

God knows I could not suffer more and live.
 He will forgive
My taking comfort in a boast.
 I stand,
Crippled by Pain's right hand—
 But at my post.

The Freedwoman

SAIN'T Spirit of the Time, your bond is free.
And yet, bewildered, at the gate
Of my old slavery
I wait.

“Hired room for cell, for grating fear of Him”:
Saint Vincent gave his women these :
I want no cloister, dim
With trees.

I want no habit whom pride dignifies,
Pride braced like girdle round my hips :
No veil for quiet eyes
And lips.

A Rule I want, less brittle than that rule's
Cast-iron which schoolboys will not break :
“Play only for the school's
High sake !”

Vows ! I want vows, more stringent than our two
Mockeries of a nun's old vow—
All, Saint Time-Spirit, you
Allow.

(There's none will take to husband poverty.
But will none bear a lover's hold?
Chaste we are called when we
Are cold.

Our duty's to ourselves : since Nature meant
We to our natures should take oath,
Sworn, we're obedient,
For growth.)

Slave that I am! I would have bonds again
Sooner than freedom thro' men's finding
We are not worth the pain
Of binding.

The Innocent

SHE grasped
A hope, and clasped
The stone. "A maid he would condemn.
In hope You went to Bethlehem,
And brought forth joy.
God's Mother, send a boy!"

God lent
An innocent
From His child-treasury aloft.
And so, because that mother oft
Sought boys, souls never,
She had a boy for ever.

The Field of Honour

HIS sword of honour hung before her eyes :
By taking thought his wife should bear a
child
More worthy to be styled
His son.
Now, with shut lids, indifferent, she lies,
Work done.

For not without life given did she yield
Her new-fleshed sword to Death. A wreath of bay,
Laurels, not lilies, lay
Upon her !
This for her tomb : "She perished on the field
Of honour."

Going Deaf

ONLY a saint
Wishes the world-sounds to grow
Daily more faint.
Oh ! they are dear to me,
And they go—
March of the city street,
Drum of the forward beat
Of the sea.

God has said : “ Hush !
For you the laugh of no child,
Call of no thrush :
Save when My loud bass clef,
Music-wild,
Plays for a storm’s full throat
Swelling the thunder-note,
You are deaf.”

Devon to Me

WHAT will you give me, Devon dear?
Red earth (where Dawlish cliffs drop sheer
And winds are fresh)
To build your flesh :
Sea-water for your heart's blue blood,
And rain to set your cheeks abund.

What shall I give you, Devon dear?
Remembrance. Hold against your ear
Her rose-lipped shell
Whence sound-waves swell
In praise of Devon's trinity,
Cold moor, and scented coombe, and sea.

A Yellowhammer

CAGED over the blacksmith's door,
He would watch the horses shod
For that open road where he'd want no more
A ditch seed-strewn by God.

He chirped to me : " O the gorse !
O bush where the nettle stings !
You'll fly near my hedge on that bright bay horse,
Twin-coloured with my wings."

Wild heart-beats fluttered his breast
Where the wing-brown turns to chrome :
So I bought him freedom to find his nest—
I have been sick for home.

Thro' the Lowlands

INLAND I trudged. The curving sky
Was like a victor's arch, and I
Must tramp below it, vanquished. Frost
Had drenched the heather which I crossed;
And as my sea-wet feet splashed by,
A curlew's lamentable cry
Rose from the peat-hags. With a sigh
I thought of some poor sea-gull lost
Inland.

There was no green to satisfy
The hunger in a soul land-shy,
Tho' all the sunlit moors were glossed
With damp, and all the boulders mossed.
O tide-gods, do not let me die
Inland!

The Water-Carrier's Cry

(*Arabic: Ya 'owwad Allah! = O! may God pay me!*)

DRINK, O thirsty. For on my shoulder,
Strapped on my shoulder
I bear the Nile,
Sweet as spring from a moss-grown boulder
Steeped in mist on the Frank's grey isle.

Sprigs of the orange plant are brushing,
Fragrantly brushing
My bowl's brass rim;
Out of my leathern flask is rushing
Sweet Nile water: the bowl shall brim.

Allah pay me! I crave a penny,
Egypt's penny,
Or cry instead:
"Folk that are poor as I! Will any
Drop in my wallet a crust of bread?"

Laburnum

(*Gaelic: A' Craobh Abraon = The April Tree*)

A PIPER marched from the south ;
And a blackbird whistled : “ Who
Will cut him a flute for his whistling mouth
To sing the sunshine through ? ”

The April tree at my door
Soughed happily : “ Sun is good !
Will you steal from this branch a green slip for
Your bagpipe’s whistlewood ? ”

I thought of gold flow’rs to be
When the sun of May shines forth :
I cut him a flute from my April tree,
And, piping, he went north.

Told in the Isles

I

GOD bent the apple-tree and sprayed
A handful of its rose-flushed foam
On common loam.

He spread His azure robes and stayed
Against the skirts thereof a wind
That wandered, blind.

Deep in His hollow palm He laid
A wave that for its mother-sea
Sighed bitterly.

Of apple-foam,
And fragile wind a-roam,
And wave (how restless for a home !),
Was woman made.

II

The river spirit bent the sedge,
Gloating and gloating.
Her weed-green body hugged the bank,
Floating and floating
To reach the livid lips which drank.
A moorhen at the water's edge
Was scarcely fluttered when he sank.

The woman huddled in the grass.
 " River, thief-river,
Your guilty rushes shake with dread,
 Shiver and shiver
To hear the widow beg her dead.
Fetch me his body, river lass,
And fondle this good plaid instead."

The river spirit drew the gift,
 Gliding and gliding,
To dungeons wet and green where he,
 Hiding and hiding,
Lay fettered in green drapery.
Skyward she let the body drift :
His own plaid wrapped him decently.

III

The woman huddled by her fire,
 Weeping and weeping,
As laughing flames rose, gyre on gyre.
No other life breathed in the house,
Though, once, across the floor's old mire,
Long soaked in silence, tripped a mouse,
 Cheeping and cheeping.

The child rose slowly from his grave,
 Creeping and creeping
Towards her turf-built hut : a wave
Crawls so towards a sandy beach.
And nothing in the hut spoke, save
The talking fire, till he broke speech,
 Peeping and peeping :

“O mother by the fire, you sit
 Steeping and steeping
Our hearth in tears. Your mother-wit
Should tell you that my couch grows cold
When all your teardrops water it :
Your smiles might warm me in the mould,
 Sleeping and sleeping.”

A Covenanter's Bible

I PROPPED it on my knee and shook
 Its pages wide : " John Craig. His Book."
 Old perfumes filled my inglenook.

The smell of leather
 Rose, mingled with the smoke of peat :
 And turf purred softly thro' the heat :
 " Torn Book, our younger days were sweet
 Among the heather."

But in the glow I saw a dyke,
 A sodden bush, a man—belike
 He would have welcomed axe or pike,
 He was so lonely
 Among the furze and thistledown.
 Fierce texts he read, with watchful frown.
 (The rain had turned those pages brown—
 And not rain only.)

For, in the crackling peat-cakes, I
 Heard rush of pebbled burn, and cry
 Of wind on bracken, and the sigh
 Of swordblades, finding
 A scabbard in him. (Ashes gleamed.)
 Across the turf a bullet screamed :
 Torn so, the blood-stained leather seemed
 A noble binding.

After the Tryst

HE dipped his muzzle to the dust as though
He thirsted for clean heather; and the brown,
Wind-shaggy fringes of his hair hung down
Over two bloodshot eyes which in noon's glow
Were seeking mist they stared through hours ago:
Redgauntlet's forehead arched in that same frown.
Horns bent, he met the traffic of the town,
And roared his ancient slogan at this foe:
"The horns of us, the hill folk, who shall meet?"
Most scornfully he pawed the granite street
With hoofs that ached for hillsides and the joy
Of pebble-paven streams: as scornfully
He tramped across the plain to butchery
As if his flanks were branded: "Mine. Rob
Roy."

The Warhorse

HE mowed the lawn, and 'mid the whirl
Of wheels, 'mid busy blade's sharp stir,
Forgot he was a pensioner.

He cropped the grass, but when he felt
Clear mercy of its dew he smelt
Hot dustiness which is the veldt.

He pricked his ears at rise and fall
Of blackcap's fluting on the wall,
And played it was a bugle call.

He stepped above a daisy's head
As though he feared his hoofs might tread
Upon the white smile of the dead.

The Coward

HE waited for the bugle's "Charge!",

Heart beating time to foolish song.

A minute passed, like some slow barge

Dragging its laden planks along

The slow canal's rat-haunted marge.

Fear put her hand on eyes and lips

And twitched them open; sunburnt cheek

Was sallowed by her finger-tips,

Which chalked across it: "Coward!" Weak

Became his limbs beneath her whips.

Far down she drove him, sick with thought,

To empty deeps which have no name.

War songs beat thro' his brain and wrought

Foul images of war: his shame

Was too much thinking. . . . But he fought.

The Swimmer

SUN, being brother of mine,
Clothe me, and shine
Full on my flesh.
So to the drowned in their cave
Comes what they crave—
Sight of the gorse by you gilded afresh.

Wind, being brother of mine,
Clothe me with fine
Mist from the hill.
So to the drowned in their cave
Comes what they crave—
Scent of a moor where the bracken's young still.

Sea, being brother of mine,
Clothe me, and twine
Weeds as I pass.
So to the drowned in their cave
Comes what they crave—
Touch of a land where the green waves are grass.

The Conscript

WITH rain the brushwood steep was dim,
 And from blurred heights the fort hung,
 grim,
 Since there his barracks gaped for him.
 (A bugle shrilled : "O brothers! we
 Shall rouse a lad from Brittany.")

Upon his sight the town struck grey ;
 His eyes were aching for a bay
 Where sails and net-buoys heave and sway.
 (A sabre flashed : "O brothers! we
 Shall thrill a lad from Brittany.")

The barracks scored across his brain
 Remembrance of that night's cold rain :
 Yet now he would march back again.
 (A gun growled out : "O brothers! we
 Have made a man for Brittany.")

The Finn

SEA-WATER filled his veins for blood.

Slant-eyed and clumsy-fingered, he
Steered the old brig as daintily
Between foul banks of river mud
As on clean stretches of the sea.

(Even keel ! even keel !

Erik the Finn is at the wheel.)

The winds were drowsing in their cave.
The brig's calm-baffled master knew
That all the wind-folk lagged and flew
At a Finn's bidding ; not a wave
Dimpled to whistling from his crew.

(Wind, go sleep ! wind, go sleep !

Erik the Finn is on the deep.)

Hist ! Little waves began to lap
About the weary hull ; the least
Of winds puffed out the mainsail, creased
With waiting. Was the Finn's old cap
Pointed, alluringly, nor'-east ?

(Wind, rush in ! wind, rush in !

Fill the cap of Erik the Finn.)

Lantern Song

HANG out the lanterns. Lightly swaying,
 Buoyantly swaying,
 They float, and fan
Hoyden winds from the New World playing
Over the heart of old Japan.

Light all the candles. Painted dragons,
 Paper dragons
 Crowd the lanes ;
Dipping their beaks in the saki flagons,
Over the booths swing the painted cranes.

Light all the candles. Plum and cherry,
 Peach and cherry
 Long ago
Dropped their blossoms for earth to bury ;
Dusk at the shop front lets them grow.

Hang out the lanterns. Green and yellow,
 Purple and yellow
 And pink they are :
Dusk on the skyline strings their fellow,
Lighting her candle, the evening star.

To Madame L. M.

IF you were blind, you would be spared the sight
Of Change, whose face is wan as that of Night
Seen in a lamplit sickroom at the dawn.
How could Change harm you, sightless? He
might fawn

On your musician's hand, but would not bite
Fingers which rule the keyboard's black and white.
Would touch imperial take sudden flight,
Or brain, to pay eyes' debt, be put in pawn
If you were blind?

Thoughts of the sun were trouble infinite?
So lamps set on a broken roadway might
Trouble a room, though all its blinds were drawn.
Still could you smell the rose and walk the lawn:
Your name would still be Lucy, which is "Light,"
If you were blind.

Everyman's Cloak

HE tarried in a lonely street.
The craven, filmy-fingered damp
Was feeling at his breast for heat ;
Nor was there comfort in a lamp
Which lighted none but ghostly feet.

She crept towards him painfully.
Her face was hid in decent lawn—
A screen before such agony
Of knowledge as fulfilling dawn
Brings home to women by the sea.

“ Your name is on my college roll.
Behold your gown ! ” And as she spoke,
Black drapings round his body stole.
“ Man, I am Knowledge. In this cloak
Of Grief I clothe the human soul.”

An Auld Dominie

HE hangs here in a whittled frame
Over this desk on which his name
Is daily scratched : his eyes still blame,
But cannot stop, the idler's game
Of noughts-and-crosses.
Now, if he walks, his clouted shoes
Glide over creaking plank. The blues
Of coat and neckerchief and trews
Are paint-fast. (Though he cannot lose
That purse, a net of many hues,
Some dealer tosses
Among odd stock that watch-chain, steel,
With lion rampant on the seal.)

Handy, there stood a mull of horn,
An hour-glass, carved : "I holde in scorn
All ydlenesse," an ear of corn,
Which meant : "In hairst-rigs, come the morn,
Our bairns are needed."
He used no tawse when any rough
Farm-lad would sweep a homespun cuff
Across a pile of slates, or puff

At some wee lassie's curls ; enough
For him to take a pinch of snuff,
 And young eyes pleaded :
His canny world obeyed the law
Of wrath it felt and never saw.

He only taught things commonplace,
Longing to teach Augustan grace
Of style gem-finished, or to pace
Old Rome with Livy. So, his face
 Stern-set for ever
Towards grey benches, he forgot
The spelling-fault, the sum, the blot.
That farm where Horace lived was not
Among the Lowland hills ? Then what
Were yonder barns and orchard-plot ?
 Forgive him. Never
Did he forget to fill the glen
With better than Rome's breed of men.

Little Sister

I TOOK away the rose
Whereon grown fingers had
Made baby fingers close.
She would be sad
To wake and find them full
Of buds she should not pull.

I made her take instead
Some daisies. She will see
Their tips are rosy red ;
But now she'll be
Quite sure her flowers are such
As any child may touch.

The Embroideress

THE attic window framed a face,
 A lifted hand not lacking grace,
 And framed for her the commonplace.

(The view's a dreary
 Vista of chimney pots and maze
 Of humming wires that go all ways.)
 She only lifted eyes to gaze
 When she was weary.

In browns were limned the chimney stacks;
 The window-glass was stained with blacks,
 Though dawn the artist round the cracks
 Ran golden lead-lines.
 But, like fall'n rainbows, on her knee
 Lay silks for her embroidery,
 Such colours as you only see
 On missal head-lines.

She lived in Colour's world. Its hue—
 Its rose and purple, green and blue—
 Had dyed her spirit thro' and thro'.
 Her fingers, flexile
 Although her hand had toiled all night,
 Flew deftly, 'mid the soot's foul blight.
 She loved the kingdoms of the light,
 And was an exile.

Dutiful

“**D**AUGHTER, I have no bed.”
She answered Him and said :
“ O Love, it is my mother’s bed I make.”
“ That will I take
Instead.”

“ Daughter, this hem is torn.”
“ O Love, but I am sworn
To mend my father’s coat.” “ You stitch for Me
Whatever he
Has worn.”

“ Daughter, to Me draw nigh.”
“ O Love, Your square of sky
Steam on the kitchen window blurs and blots.”
“ Among the pots
Am I.”

The Drug

I DO not seek for beauty with a torch,
 Luring her from the alleys and the lanes
 Which honeycomb the brain's
 Grey hive, to scorch
 Bloom of her body and her wings with light.

She flaunts her loveliness before my face :
 "Look, O my lover : am I very fair ?
 Lie in my bosom. There
 A little space
 Your soul, forgetting faith, shall live by sight."

Just now I saw the baby moon tilt up
 A horn behind that almond ; and I drank
 Till beauty's clear wine sank
 Within the cup,
 The amethystine, cloud-piled cup, of night.

So, when the moon was full, I saw it rise
 And turn from gold to silver as it rose :
 What though my brain buzzed : "Close
 The seeing eyes,
 Or peep, like most, at beauty through a chink ?"

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I am so drunk with beauty that my soul
Lies drowning in her wine, or wakes to such
 Life, it lives overmuch :

 This lovely bowl
All hours hold to my lips, and shall I shrink ?

I will, O Life. Let this cup pass from me,
For beauty drugs me to the pain of things.
 And in my ear there rings

 Eternally :

“But He, when He had tasted, would not drink.”

Content

GIFT of tongues was my gift. Woods of Kent,
I am wearying still
To try axe-ring of sayings that fill
All the Schwarzwald with sound.
Stark Sierras in green shall be gowned,
Grey Sologne shall abound
In green trees,
If the saplings be watered until
I lose tongue-touch with these.
“Hum their songs,” said Content.

Under rice-golden canvas are pent
All the kings of the East
When Lord Colour, Heav’n’s Rajah, would feast
With his vicekings of Hind
And their pale sahiblog. Though Death grinned
In a face fever-thinned,
To your board
I would come with my kin once at least
And taste colour, my Lord!—
“Sick for home,” said Content.

Dreams

DUST-SOAKED and dun,
Earth sleeps. Hot amber sun
Blood-splashes azure sky.
Muezzin's cry
Is hushed a little while. How should worn
church-bells call?
How should the fall
Of evening greyness in fresh English fields, the
sigh
Of wind-stirred grasses, hurt me here? It
seems
That home must haunt my silence after all.
Ah! dreams, dear, dreams!

Rose-glory's dead.
Here's summer harvested,
Red fragrance for rose-press;
Her drowsiness
Creeps, heavy-perfumed, to pine-fretted Rhodope.
How should the sea
Come stinging to my lips across lands harbourless,
And rouse me to remember fern-trailed streams
And fishing-harbours in the Westcountry?
Ah! dreams, dear, dreams!

Hot tongue of gold
 Laps monasteries old
 As flaming hills, and frets
 White minarets
 With garish yellow flush. How should the streets
 be grim
 Sea-grey, mist-dim,
 And melon sellers be tanned menders of coarse nets,
 And husbandmen be fisherfolk? It seems
 Their reed-pipes have that little cry of him.
 Ah! dreams, dear, dreams!

48 The Lilt of the Little Gods

The Lilt of the Little Gods

THE wind plays on his organ in the pines
Day's Nunc Dimittis ; but the woman hears
Only such gypsy-lilt as eglantines
Nod their sweet heads to when a brown bee nears,
Humming it in their ears.

With wander-thirst her lips are cracking ;
How shall she taste adventure's earth-brown wines
If lover's hand to lift the cup be lacking ?

Winds may crash out an oratorio,
And she will only hear the treble strains
Which blackbird troubadours a-wander blow
Out of their ebon flutes. So in the rain's
Staccato on the panes

Shrills the road's calling and the river's.
"Shall I go forth?" she wonders, "shall I go?"
Forth come the little gods. (Warm twilight
shivers.)

"I am that god whose emeralds are flung
Broadcast about your lawn : I clutch rank gold
Of dandelions : daisy-pearls among
Your turf's green waves I dive for. I am old
For plant-strife, but I hold

My rake and pruning-shears as tightly
As when that long-set holly hedge was young.
Mistress, for you I keep the pleasance sightly."

The Lilt of the Little Gods 49

“ And I am he whose tawny fingers bind
Sweet burdens on your patient trees. I touch
The russet apples, fruiting in full wind,
The pippins, or the rosy pearmain, such
As Eve loved overmuch.

I stroke the apricots and peaches
With whose soft down the south wall's cloak is
lined.

Mistress, to your dear lip my finger reaches.”

“ O listen but a moment's length to her
Who lays cool hand on linen in your chest.
My breath, sweet-scented as sweet lavender,
Will bleach a kerchief whiter than the breast
Whereon your laces rest.

I smooth the sheet's white wave that billows
New-flung across your bed ; it shall not stir
To irk the tired, grey face beside your pillows.”

“ And listen, gypsy-heart, to me who guard
The firstlings of your motherhood. I see
A cupboardful of dusty relics, charred
Like ashes in the grate of memory.

With God's white company
He tramps who in the lanes of Devon
Wore out those baby shoes ; or peeps, cloud-barred,
Behind the azure nursery-panes of Heaven.”

The wind tires of his organ. After some
Impatient chords, he blows a seraphine
Hid in the moaning beeches. Will she come?
Not though the pipe which ravished Hamelin
Should woo her to the sin,
Would she and 'venture come together!
The wander-music dies, like weary hum
Of weary bees among the autumn heather.

Femme d'Artiste

I WIVED Art's daughter, Poverty.

But when I brought her home with me,
"This is no fitting house," said she.

"You are," she said, "too fine a groom."

She shrank our home to one bare room,
And swept that barer with her broom.

She brushed my Ushak rug to holes,
And chipped my pale Satsuma bowls,
And burnt my Sheraton for coals.

A seagull 'mid a flock of rooks,
White Innocence, with pallid looks,
Crouched on her pawn-heap—ancient books :

Or, white against my inkpot, sought
To purify my cheapened thought ;
I only splashed him as I wrought.

She sold my brain for thirty pence.
As Hunger dragged his purchase hence,
Out of my room paled Innocence.

Forsworn

BLUE over the olive-boughs
Hung Heav'n. When I chose to quit
The little grey trees that had heard my vows,
I lost my hope of it.

I wish I were in my cell
By the garden where they grew !
How am I to wait for the passing-bell
Without my God or you ?

A Monk's Mother

THE whips of God curl round a youngling ash :
Anguished, it beats the casement with its thin,
Tormented arms. I listen to the lash
Of some five-thonged, five-knotted discipline

On shoulders bowed by sin

Or heavy with the fear of sinning :

I kiss worn arms, feel drops that hotly splash
His robe Who is our end and our beginning.

Our Father, let him sleep! The servant tires
With labour on Your bread and oil and wine.
Nay, servant is he, whom the abbot hires
To press Your olives or to prune Your vine?

He is Your son—and mine,

Who scourges sleep. Too soon the Latin's
Thunder shall storm the sky from many quires,
Too soon his lantern guide him forth to matins.

Our Father, does he sleep? For, like some dirge
They sing in Brittany when babies die,
The little ash is moaning. Let the scourge
That whips this bosom where he used to lie

Drop with the wind : so I,

Dreaming my dear no longer wrestles
With You in prayer, may crush dream-habit's
serge

Close to this heart whereon no baby nestles.

If he had only died, I could have said :
“He will not suffer any more.” I cheat
My love with baby-fancies in my bed :
Yet always wonder when I sit at meat :
“Has he enough to eat ?”

Doubt in a mother, Sin-forgiving,
Can You forgive ? I'd trust You with my dead.
If I might learn to trust You with my living !

If he had only died, I could have thought :
“Still he's my son. And since I keep the law
Which God and all the saints of God have taught,
I share his glory.” But last night I saw
Him dying on the straw :

And said : “Can pillow-fancies smother
My fear lest he forget ? I shall be nought.
What holy monk in Heav'n will want his mother ?”

À Mon Ami

I. *First Words*

ALTHOUGH I have your letters locked away,
They are but yours,
Not Love's, nor, even need be mine ; so pure's
The note of friendship struck for me that they
Sound the world's common chord for any friend.
World without end
Must I so answer them, mon ami, say ?

Often I wake as though night spoke my name,
See in the dark
Some letter I have sent you ; spark on spark
Fills my hot palms from out the fires of shame ;
At friendship's stake in fires of love I stand,
Holding my hand,
The hand which wrote the letter, to the flame.

But now I will not pant : " That's woman, that,
Half-child, and this,
Flung with a man's straight aim, will surely miss
The mark a woman should be aiming at."
I will be woman if I choose, without
World's hint of doubt :
" This species looks for change of habitat."

“Mon ami” is “my friend”—with change of key.
It's not thought strange
When strings of long-cased viol suffer change,
Carried to some warm music-gallery.
I'll play on my warmed heartstrings as I please.
Love-letters, these ?
The letters of my love, yours faithfully.

II. *Making Music*

Footsore, mon ami, all His saints have trod
The music-gallery of God.
How might I walk there, shod ?

Shoes put from off my feet, I went within,
And saw your soul, a violin
Rocked at a poet's chin.

God knows, and I know, that you are a poet.
Easy to play on you and show it,
But would you too might know it !

Easy to know that other women twitch
Such bows ! But who's the hautboy which
Has given you the pitch ?

Never my glory, never ! I drew nigh
To reeds upon the floor awry,
And saw that there was I.

For, see, I am a reed not only bruised.
 I'm broken, like some flute abused
 To keep Life's fool amused.

No one shall pipe a love-song through me now ;
 Or tempt Love to me, singing : "How
 Crab-apples load her bough !"

Or so breathe on me that young children's feet
 Dance round a woman growing meet
 For music in God's street.

Yet Time mends outer wood. (Who'll mend the
 inner ?)

I pipe, as proud as you, breadwinner,
 For pence to buy my dinner.

III. *By Way of Bridal*

"Who'll ring the bell?"

"I," said my hope,
 Swung high on the rope.

"I'll ring her bell."

"Who'll say the prayers?"

"I," said my tongue
 Seven-languaged. "I've sung.

I'll say her prayers."

“ Who holds the ring ? ”

“ I,” said my hand.

“ ’Twas I worked for that band.

I hold her ring.”

“ Who lifts the veil ? ”

“ I,” said my pride,

Lace-white as the bride.

“ I lift her veil.”

“ Who’ll throw the shoe ? ”

“ I,” said ill-luck,

“ In honour of pluck,

I’ll throw her shoe.”

“ Who’ll pour the wine ? ”

“ I,” said sea-blood,

Come cheekward in flood.

“ I’ll pour her wine.”

“ Who’ll drink the health ? ”

“ I,” said my dear,

So sisterly near.

“ I’ll drink her health.”

“ Who is the groom ? ”

“ I,” said my pen,

More loving than men.

“ I am her groom.”

IV. *At an Office Window*

Open your window, though the dust
Shall settle on your files and you,
As on all penwork that we do,
You and I, dear, it surely must.

The street shall vex you momentarily ;
But have one moment for one dream,
And creak of laden cart shall seem
Creaking of cordage out to sea.

One moment, and you cross the floor
Lightly, tall strength of you in check :
Sea's law—let him who walks on deck
Mind them asleep—God built you for.

You see tall ships where no ships are,
Rigging and masts against blank sky,
See now and then, for steering by,
That silver disc of Luck, your star.

River or road you have to wife :
Face of strange lands you long for so
That, were you mine, dear, you should go :
You are no journeyman to life.

v. *Mother-in-Love*

You say "My Mother" as I, once, said "Home."
How, when she quits those little streets, stone-
grey,
And I these streets on streets, brick-built in
chrome,
How shall I know her, dearest, in that day?
Give me a sign! I'd try,
Feeling her pass me by,
To take your name on my pale lips and say:
"Mother-in-love, it's I!"

Surely God has some heav'n for women all
Whose arms have ached with children and whose
arms
Have ached—without them? I should have to call
Only your name, but she could use for charms
On porter-myrmidons
The names of many sons—
Names that I heard about the little farms
Where I was exiled once.

And I should know her when she called if she
Rolled all the words so slowly from her tongue
That, hearing them, I heard a far-off sea

Beat on the sands and slowly wash among
Loose shingle. This I know :
My going would be slow
On her heart's road, a narrow road, thorn-hung,
Where only neighbours go.

She gave you to the world, then gave you up
To work your own salvation out. But mine,
What gift is mine? I also am a cup
Of sacrifice, but, dear, I hold no wine.
Fulfilled, a mother stands
Upon life's borderlands.
Give me, instead of love, this little sign :
Would she take empty hands ?

VI. *Last Words*

Time fitted my name together, dear,
And the sound of it is mellowing ;
Dumb women that heard it, year by year,
Are met in me that have heard and sing ;
But what, save blood, would have been the same,
Had water blessed in some other name ?

So yours is you. But it's not for me.
The name I take on my lips is but
An echo of that familiarly
Called out as the door of Home swings shut,
Though bliss, for me, (and a social sin),
Is only a name to them within.

If I chose, I'd write it here, where mine
Is signed, obedient, at the foot.
But when I come to the poet's shrine
Where words and rumours of words are put,
I talk to your spirit from my stall—
And do not give you a name at all.

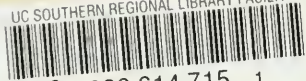
Resurrection

ALL-KNOWING, shall You keep
 So ugly a dwarf after death in his
 body's prison,
 Letting Your angels peep
At the tortured mouth and the twisted limbs You
 bedizen
 In blessed white? I'd weep,
Awaking the man-botch I am, but all shame I'd
 creep
Those gold-starred floors if I woke not "I," the
 wizen,
 Grotesque and crude and cheap.
Whoso looks for the rising must look at Your
 lovely risen—
 May I, believing, sleep?

THE END

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